

A difficult point to argue

By Mark Osborn

A FEW brief points in response to Brad Cleveland (*Against all immigration control?*, WL 29).

To want "freedom of movement", without demanding the abolition of *all* immigration controls, is contradictory and, I suspect, bends in the face of prevailing prejudice.

I would agree with Brad on one point: to oppose campaigns for limited reform to existing immigration laws, as some on the left do, because they do not demand the abolition of all immigration law is wrong. But just as supporting wage disputes does not stop us making propaganda for socialism, so we can demand specific reforms *and* the abolition of immigration laws.

My worries about this matter are a bit different. I cannot think of many issues on which the far left is so isolated: virtually no-one agrees with the abolition of all immigration law. This should not make us drop our ideas, but it should make us think about *why* we are so isolated.

Sometimes "abolish all immigration controls!" is taken as an article of faith and the case for it is badly and demagogically argued. The left must get out of the habit of maintaining the line by denouncing anyone who dissents as a racist or someone who panders to racism. Although *some* opposition is from racists and the laws *are* racist, opposition to the demand goes way beyond a small minority of hard-core bigots.

We should also stop arguing for the abolition of all these laws on the grounds that there are more people leaving the country than entering it. This agitational point, to undercut the racist argument about being "swamped" by a "flood" of immigrants, is fine but it has no real bearing on the case for abolition of immigration controls.

A small shift in immigration procedure — far short of their abolition — would convert a net outflow of people into an inflow. What would happen to this argument then?

The usual procedure is to *deny* the abolition of all these laws would lead to very many people entering Britain — something which is so self-evidently stupid as to not reach the level of "argument".

We need to recognise the real problems about arguing the case.

The "common sense" argument against us is that the country is "full up". Taken literally, this is just nonsense. If 100 million people tried to live on the Isle of White there might be a point to this argument but an extra 10 million people in Britain will not "fill Britain up".

Someone who says this almost certainly means that there is not enough to go around; how can "we" feed, house and give jobs to millions of more people when the health

service is run down, millions are already out of work and accommodation is expensive and hard to find?

Our argument must be that the rich can afford to pay for the health care we need; that we should cut the working week to 35 hours or 30 hours so that all workers have a job, etc.

However, it is true that abolition of all immigration laws — if it happened tomorrow, in isolation — could well make things worse. It is not just "racist rubbish" to believe that hundreds of thousands of immigrants looking for work could drive down wages or make other workers unemployed.

Our answers are clear: stand with the immigrants; unionise immigrant workers, fight for full employment. But many people think such measures are unlikely. Given the existing Labour Party and trade union leaderships, that is not really surprising. There is a *real* problem here.

We are left with making the general case for internationalism, seemingly against the immediate bread-and-butter concerns of workers in Britain. We cannot make the internationalism particularly concrete (as for instance it is possible to make the case for international trade union links within a multinational corporation).

That is why the argument is difficult to win and why we are so isolated. Perhaps we can do better if we argue better...

X-Files is the real thing!

By Joanne Radcliff and Nicole Aylott

WE are writing in anger at the report by Ruah Carlyle about the *X-Files*. He obviously doesn't know what he is talking about.

We would like to say that the *X-Files* is a well produced programme with great story lines and brilliant acting. Some of the story lines may be a little weird but if people are paranoid then that reflects society as a whole, not the *X-Files* making people this way.

We and our friends are sick to death of all the crap on our TV screens, programmes that make out that life is brilliant and perfect, when we know it is not.

The *X-Files* however shows life to be more realistic. We're not saying we believe in all the things presented to us by the *X-Files*, but it is different.

The *X-Files* is getting away from the stereotype that comes with police/FBI/partner programmes. It doesn't have a long-legged, blonde bimbo with a tough, strong man who shows no emotion. Instead it has a smart woman and a sensitive man. The *X-Files* shows a partner relationship based on respect — they don't jump into bed together every five seconds.

The actors who portray the characters, David Duchovny and Gillian Anderson, display an unmatched range of talent without ever, even once, sacrificing the integrity of

the characters they create.

We want to say that we are not nerdy fans who go trainspotting and put tin foil around our heads to stop aliens invading our brains. And we most certainly do not need to get a life. We think that Mr Carlyle is the one who needs a life and to stop criticising other people's.

The programme is most definitely not new age, Mother Earth, peace, more tea vicar bullshit. We have never heard of a more wrong description of the *X-Files* in all our lives.

We believe that Mr Ruah Carlyle should get his act together and think before he writes garbage such as the type in the March edition of *Workers' Liberty*.

Trust no-one!

By Ellen Maxim

IT'S A shame that Ruah Carlyle (*Workers' Liberty* 29) couldn't do more than throw puerile abuse and ridiculous assertions at *The X-Files*. Perhaps if he'd watched more than one or two episodes then his "review" might have shed more light on the series.

The X-Files, which is 'hugely popular' and 'entertaining' as Ruah admits, follows two FBI agents investigating strange events. One of them is Fox Mulder, a maverick agent who believes the government is covering up the existence of extra-terrestrials and is trying to prove it; the other is Dana Scully, a medical doctor recruited to the FBI, who attempts to find a scientific explanation for everything, bringing Mulder down to earth at the end of every show.

The X-Files is well acted, with believable protagonists who are not superhuman — they make mistakes, they get scared, they make jokes, just like ordinary people. The show is not racist, sexist or homophobic, and I'm glad to see a TV programme for once where the main female character is not there simply to provide glamour or the 'love interest', but who is a character in her own right.

Anyone who has watched more than one or two episodes knows that not every show features "aliens, a government conspiracy, a cult, or all three." Many have featured things that do actually happen in the real world — "Jersey Devil" was about wild humans (a phenomenon that is well documented, like the 'Monkey Boy' of Ceylon); "Irresistible" featured a psychotic killer (hmm, too many of those to mention here); mad scientists running dangerous, unauthorised experiments were portrayed in the episodes "Young at Heart", "Blood", "Red Museum" (again, many doctors have been exposed for this); and many other stories, such as military cover-ups, which are not fantastic at all have provided material for *The X-Files*.

So why is it popular? Well, it does tap into a rich seam of paranoia. It appeals to a huge number of people ("nerds" according to Ruah) who follow the FBI agents as they attempt to uncover "the truth." I don't think people who watch *The X-Files* are "nerds"; I think they have a great deal to worry about.

You don't have to believe the government



The X-Files: an intelligent fantasy

is covering up the existence of aliens to understand that governments cover up an awful lot.

Watergate, Thalidomide, Clive Ponting, the Zircon spy satellite, the Scott Report, US government secret experiments on prisoners, the Stalker affair, the secret dirty tricks against the National Union of Mineworkers during the 1984-5 miners' strike, Gulf War syndrome... no wonder many people feel they have no control over their lives.

The X-Files is an intelligent fantasy programme that explores these legitimate fears through the medium of science fiction, and it does it very well.

Science fiction and science fantasy have given us many great books, films and TV shows; are they all "bilge" too because they're not real? If that's the case, then bye-bye 1984 (Orwell), *Brave New World* (Huxley), and 2001 (Kubrick/Clarke).

The X-Files stands in the science fiction tradition of many of these 'greats', and without any "New Age bullshit" that Ruah accuses *The X-Files* of peddling.

There is not one episode which advocates peace, love and "New Age bullshit" — *The X-Files* advocates seeking out facts, evidence and doing something about it.

The chicken factory episode, "Our Town", concerns the efforts of Mulder and Scully to find out why inhabitants of a small southern US town are dying of Creutzfeldt-Jacob Disease. The reason turns out to be the cannibalistic practices of a cult that embraces the whole town; the infected people have eaten one of their neighbours, who had CJD.

It certainly doesn't sound so weird now, after revelation upon revelation of the extent of the BSE crisis. No-one believes the government when they say beef is safe, especially when the problem could have been solved at least ten years ago.

The character of Mulder has a motto: "Trust no-one." Call me paranoid if you wish, but it seems the best way to deal with those who gave us BSE.

This is a nasty world — *The X-Files* never pretends otherwise.

Glorifying addiction?

By Frank J Higgins

DESPITE what Clive Bradley wrote (in WL29), I'm not sure about *Trainspotting*. Artistic freedom is indeed very important, but any film that portrayed the pleasures of drugs and failed to convey the horror and the sure consequences of dependence on hard drugs, would be a criminal piece of proselytising. Does *Trainspotting* do that?

Drawing the line between an artistically true portrait of life and irresponsible proselytising is difficult of course. So is the question of who should draw it — that is, the question of state censorship.

Trainspotting is indeed full of life and invention, as Clive Bradley says. It is legitimate in any portrait of drug culture to portray the — ephemeral — pleasure and ecstasy, the search for which, once experienced, drives the drug culture. A long time addict I know who came off heroin after she was jailed for 'pushing' it says she spent many years vainly seeking a

repeat of the sensation she experienced at her first 'hit'. It never came back.

Trainspotting portrays, in words as well as the image of a woman's face after a 'hit' the experience of heroin explicitly as akin to an intense sexual orgasm, multiplied many times. The horror and squalor of dependence and the dementia of withdrawal attempts are portrayed too — but surrealistically, almost for laughs. Maybe, the point is that such things are out of most people's ken and a good or a super good orgasm is not.

I'm not sure there is anything like balance — that is artistic truth — in *Trainspotting* here. The very liveliness of the film works against it. There is an almost cartoon like — cartoon violence, I mean — quality to the durability of its hero. He is up and running, despite everything.

Towards the end we see him after having been off drugs for a while, preparing to inject heroin. An 'ex' addict who did that, like a dry alcoholic taking 'just one' drink, would be immediately hooked: as if he'd never been off. We see him seemingly unaffected — up and running once more. I'm not sure that *Trainspotting* is not just a very talented, heartless, and maybe dangerous, commercial exploitation piece.

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